

Thank you for allowing me to address this group today. My name is Jim Beckwith, and I am the Executive Director of the North East Kansas Area Agency on Aging, PSA09, in Hiawatha. I would like to address the future of social services delivery, specifically for seniors, and what we must do about it.

Some eight (8) years ago, then KDOA Deputy Secretary Terry Glasscock, gave a superb presentation entitled, “Why government needs to change”. It detailed how seniors of that day had literally seen a change from people riding a horse to get around, to the NASA program that put people on the moon. He made the statement that government, and the way it operates, was “parallel with Moonriders” but “on a collision course with baby boomers”. To do something about this, he said, “WE MUST CHALLENGE EVERY FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION OF OUR 19TH CENTURY ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN.”

He went on to say, “GOVERNMENT MUST... *Think* Not about the cost to government but about the cost to society; Not how government alone can problem solve but rather how the community can solve a problem; Not just of its Mission but also of its Market; and Not about creating dependence but rather about creating independence.

BUREAUCRACY MUST... *Think* Not of Service but of Empowerment; Not of a controlled centralized institution but rather of decentralized decision-making; Not just of deregulating private enterprise but also of deregulating itself; and Not just of changing systems but also of changing organizational culture.

The **MISSION** is to “SOLVE THE REAL PROBLEM; MINISTER TO THE CAUSE NOT THE SYMPTOMS; FOCUS ON OUTCOMES; and ask is it ILLNESS OR WELLNESS?

ISN'T THE MISSION ABOUT WELLNESS?

50% TO BEHAVIOR 20% DUE TO HEREDITY 20% TO ENVIRONMENT
10% OF WELLNESS IS DUE TO CARE GIVING

WHERE DOES GOVERNMENT SPEND ITS MONEY?”

Well it is now eight years later, and not much has changed, other than a large number of staff and leadership turnover at both the federal and state level. We are still talking about the coming of the aging boomers – but it seems like we are doing very little, especially in wellness and prevention. We are fighting to keep service levels equal every year, while the number of potential customers increases, and inflationary expenses drives many service providers out of business.

It's time to stop talking, and start doing something!

The prime candidates for long term care insurance are the people between 20 and 55 years of age – not seniors. Yet the role of AoA and KDOA is to look at the needs of people 60 and older. What's wrong with that picture?

The prime candidates for life style changes are between 5 and 50, not seniors.

Too many young people believe “Manual Labor” is a short Hispanic person. Too many people in America own exercise bikes and running shoes, but never use them for what they were intended to do.

WHY???

Aegism in America is as bad as it has ever been. It seems to be OK for comics and TV advertisements to make fun of “Geezers”. You rarely see an ad on TV that portrays growing older in a positive light. If you do, it is for *Depends*, *Poligrip* or *Viagra*.

What about politicians who say that Medicaid is too big a financial drain on federal and state budgets. There are low income seniors, often widows living alone, who are trying to survive on as little as \$325 per month. Many seniors either split their pills (so they can cut the high costs of medicine), or must choose between food, other basic necessities, or vital medicines. Some politicians and activist judges want to give millions of tax dollars for education, even at the expense of vital programs for current seniors, with little regard how or where the money is being spent.

Enough is enough!

We are losing nearly 70,000 of “America’s Greatest Generation” each month. America is a great nation today because countless numbers of men and women sacrificed for those who came after them. My own mother and grandparents picked potatoes in Colorado during the Great Depression for just \$.05 per day per person, so that their kids and grandkids would have a better life. We owe a huge debt to the seniors of America!

WE, you and I, and all in this room, and all Americans, owe the seniors of America more than just political rhetoric and platitudes, more than just a place on the shelf, more than just the budgetary leftovers from the legislative pork barrel politics. There wouldn’t be an America if it were not for them!

It’s time for an aging system that emphasizes wellness and prevention, that encourages innovation, that stimulates change, and that puts people first.

“WHY DOES GOVERNMENT NEED TO CHANGE?

**BECAUSE SOCIETY HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY WHILE
GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEMS HAVE CHANGED VERY LITTLE.”**

IT’S TIME!!